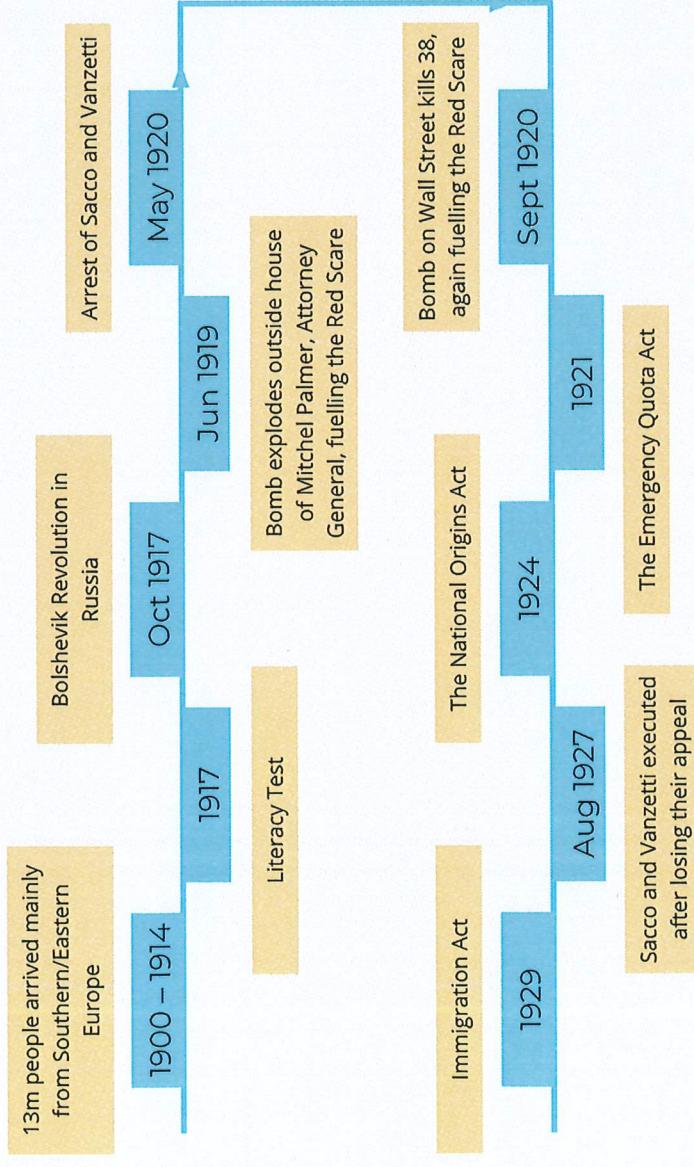


Key Question 1 : Why did immigration become such a major issue in American society?

Timeline of events



Key words

Melting Pot	people from different countries 'blending' together
Open Door Policy	accepting immigrants from various countries
Push factors	reasons people want to leave their own countries
Pull factors	factors that attracted people to the USA
Ellis Island	70% of immigrants arrived at Ellis Island near New York
WASP	white Anglo-Saxon Protestant
Red Scare	concern regarding the spread of communist and socialist ideas
Xenophobia	dislike of, or prejudice against people from other countries.
Communism	system where property is owned by community
Palmer Raids	series of arrests of thousands of suspected Communists

The Red Scare

- Many Americans were frightened by the Communist Revolution that had happened in Russia in October 1917.
- Many Americans feared that communist and anarchist ideas would spread. They viewed immigrants with increasing suspicion and became increasingly xenophobic.
- There were over 3,000 cases of industrial strikes in 1919, including the Boston Police force.
- Feelings of anger and animosity arose towards communists and many Americans believed that some of the events of 1919 and 1920 were linked to communism.
- In September 1920, a bomb exploded on Wall Street killing 38 people, and another bomb destroyed the front of the Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer's house.
- These events gave rise to the Red Scare and fear that communism was a real danger that threatened the American way of life.

The Palmer Raids

- United States Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer organised attacks against left wing organisations. Palmer spread rumours about the **Red Scare** saying that there were around 150,000 communists living in the country (0.1 per cent of the population).
- As many as 6,000 were arrested and held in a prison without a hearing and hundreds were deported. The Palmer Raids were a response to imaginary threats. Eventually they were released and the Red Scare receded.

Key Question 1 : Why did immigration become such a major issue in American society?

Melting Pot

- The **Open Door policy** hoped America would be a **melting pot** and the immigrants would be workers that would make the country richer. By 1919, more than 40 million people had arrived.
- The aim of the Open Door policy was to make immigration as easy as possible. There was a mixture of people living in America during this period such as the early immigrants, Native Americans, Black Americans, Eastern and southern Europeans, Hispanics and Asian people.
- A combination of **push and pull** factors made people immigrate to the USA. The push factors made people want to leave their own countries, and the pull factors attracted them to the USA. For example: escaping from poverty in their own country, escaping from political and economic persecution, a promise of religious tolerance and a chance to practice their faith safely, a plentiful supply of land and the hope of owning property, creating a better life, a spirit of adventure, going to a country of opportunity and equal opportunity.
- Most of the immigrants travelled by sea, and more than 70 per cent arrived on Ellis Island near New York. During the busiest periods, as many as 5,000 people a day arrived there. Most were young - in 1900 the average age was 24. The first view the immigrants saw as they arrived in America on their way to Ellis Island was the Statue of Liberty.

Important concept

The notion of the 'melting pot' and the 'open door' had served its purpose once the American economy was the strongest in the world. After that, a combination of the Red Scare and immigrants arriving from poorer parts of the world meant that the open door began to close.

Restricting Entry

- With the number of immigrants increasing, some Americans began to question the government's Open Door policy.
- Immigrants had tended to come from northern and western Europe and were White Anglo Saxon Protestants (WASPs). Between 1900 and 1914, 13 million arrived, mainly from southern and eastern Europe - Italy, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Western Poland and Greece.
- People started feeling angry towards these 'new' immigrants because they were often poor, illiterate and many were Roman Catholics or Jews, therefore from a different cultural and religious background.
- The fear of communism spread following the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 which led to the Red Scare.
- As a result, the US Congress passed laws to restrict immigration and each law in turn was more severe than the previous one.
- **Literacy Test, 1917** - a series of reading and writing tests. Many of the poorer immigrants had received no education and therefore failed the tests and were refused entry.
- **The Emergency Quota Act, 1921** - restricted the number of immigrants to 357,000 per year, and also set down a quota - only 3 per cent of the total population of any overseas group already in the USA in 1910 could come in after 1921.
- **The National Origins Act, 1924** - This law cut the quota of immigrants to 2 per cent of its population in the USA in 1890.
- **Immigration Act, 1929** - This made the quotas of the 1924 act permanent and restricted immigration to 150,000 per year.

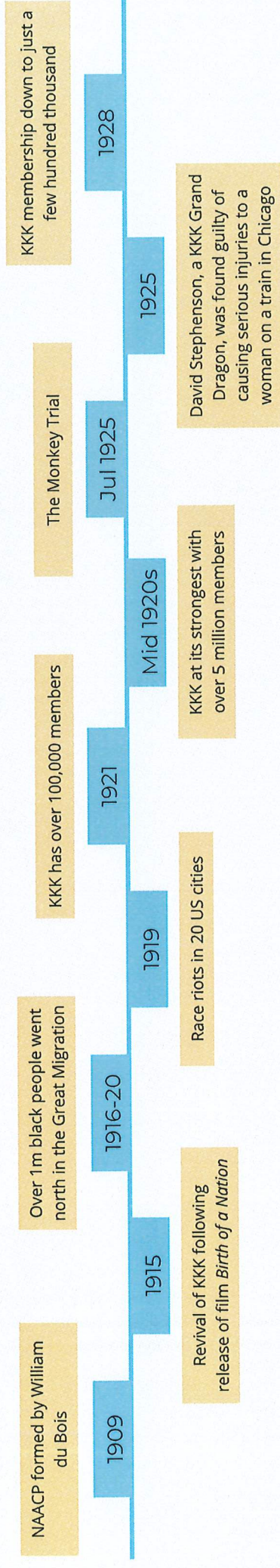
Sacco and Vanzetti

- In May 1920, two Italian immigrants, Sacco and Vanzetti, were arrested for armed robbery of a shoe factory, during which two people were killed.
- They had radical anti-government pamphlets in the car when they were arrested and both owned guns. They could not indisputably prove where they had been on the day of the murders.
- From the beginning, public opinion was against them because of their political ideas and because they were immigrants.
- Although 61 witnesses said they had seen them, the defence had 107 witnesses alleging that they had seen them somewhere else when the crime was committed.
- During the court case in May 1921, Judge Webster Thayer was rather openly prejudiced against the two men. They were found guilty.
- Although a man named Celestino Madeiros later admitted that he had committed the crime, Sacco and Vanzetti lost their appeal.
- In August 1927, they were both executed by electrocution in Charlestown prison.
- This case highlighted the attitudes and discrimination immigrants experienced.

Knowledge Organiser : The Development of the USA 1910-1929 (Unit 2)

Key Question 2 : Was America a country of religious and racial intolerance?

Timeline of events



Key words

Bible Belt	a religious area in the southern states of the USA
Evolution	scientific theory of how humans evolved
Rope Law	members of the Ku Klux Klan killed black people by hanging them without trial (lynching) and often took the law into their own hands
Jim Crow Laws	the names of the laws that introduced segregation in the south (the laws which kept black and white people apart)
Segregation	laws separating black and white people in public places in society
WASP	refers to the group known as: White Anglo Saxon Protestants

Important concept

The 'nation of contrasts' is clear within the issues of religion and race. On the one hand, fundamentalism and racism point that America was a nation of intolerance at this time. But organisations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People show that determination for a more progressive society was strong. Perhaps geography, age and class are where the contrast were.

The Monkey Trial

- Bible Belt Christian fundamentalists organised a campaign against the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution in American schools.
- The campaign was a success as in 1925, a new law was passed in six states, including Tennessee, prohibiting the teaching of Charles Darwin's **evolution**.
- The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) were outraged by the ban. One Biology teacher - Johnny Scopes, from Dayton Tennessee - ignored the new law and taught his pupils Darwin's ideas; he was taken to court.
- The court case received a great deal of publicity in the media. Clarence Darrow was Scopes' lawyer, while the lawyer for the Fundamentalists was William Jennings Bryan. The case was known informally as the Monkey Trial.
- Scopes was found guilty of teaching the theory of evolution to his pupils and was fined \$100 (approximately \$1,400 in today's money).
- By 1929, six states in the Bible Belt, in the most southern parts of the country, had passed laws against teaching the theory of evolution. It was now possible that some children in America would grow up not knowing anything about this theory.
- More importantly the case showed a different side to America from the one portrayed in the so called **Jazz Age**.

Knowledge Organiser : The Development of the USA 1910-1929 (Unit 2)

Key Question 2 : Was America a country of religious and racial intolerance?

Who were the KKK?

- The Ku Klux Klan were an American White supremacist hate group in the southern states in 1865 at the end of the American Civil War. The group believed that white people were better and wanted to see black people remain as slaves.
- The movement was revived in 1915 by William J Simmons following the release of the film *Birth of a Nation*. It grew quickly and by 1921 it had over 100,000 members. By the mid 1920s the movement was at its strongest with 5 million members.
- Only **WASPs** could join the Klan. The KKK discriminated against black people, Roman Catholics, Jews and Mexicans.
- Members of the Klan often killed black people by **hanging without trial** (lynching) – **Rope Law**. Sometimes the local police could not protect the victims and even took part in the killings.
- Those responsible were not brought to justice very often, and Klan members knew that their friends in the courts would not find them guilty.
- It was difficult for the government to change the attitudes of white people in the south and politicians were scared of losing votes.
- In 1925, David Stephenson, the Klan Indiana Grand Dragon, was found guilty of causing serious injuries to a woman on a train in Chicago.
- The membership of the Klan fell to a few hundred thousand by 1928.

Black Communities and other racial minorities

- As a result perhaps of high levels of immigration, at the beginning of the 20th century, there was more racial prejudice towards those who were not considered 'real' Americans.
- In 1900, there were 12 million black people living in the USA and 75 per cent of them lived in the south.
- Although slavery had been abolished in the 1860s, white people controlled southern states using **Jim Crow laws** to **segregate** the black population and discriminate against them. These laws prevented them from voting, gaining a good education and decent jobs.
- The majority of black Americans were not able to profit from the flourishing economy of the 1920s and early 1930s. This was especially true in the southern states where the economy was based on agriculture and crop prices fell throughout the 1920s and early 1930s.
- Industrial development had created a demand for manufactured goods and jobs were created in the industrial cities of the north.
- Between 1916-1920 almost 1 million black people went north in the Great Migration to cities like Chicago, New York and Detroit in search of work. Although there were no Jim Crow laws, black Americans were still treated as second class citizens in the northern cities. Due to low wages they lived in poor neighbourhoods, like Harlem in New York, called **ghettos**.
- In 1919, there were riots in 20 US cities as racial tension between black and white people increased. This was one of the factors that sparked the increase in the membership of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

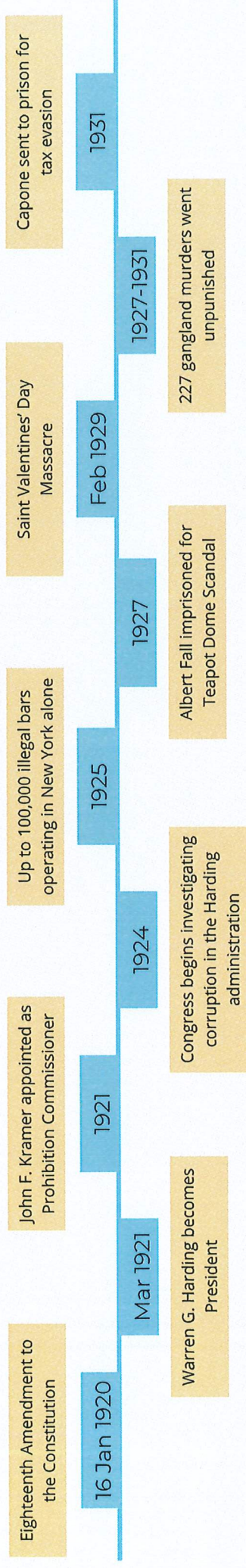
The response of the black people

- Various groups fought for the cause of black people during this period. By 1900, a former slave, **Booker T Washington** opened the **Tuskegee Institute** in Alabama to provide education and training for black people, believing that they had to make economic progress before making political progress.
- The **Harlem Renaissance** in New York developed talented black Americans such as singers, musicians, artists and authors.
- **The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP)**, established in 1909 by **William du Bois**. The NAACP focussed on opposing racism and segregation through legal methods and holding non-violent activities, such as marches and protests.
- **The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)**, established in 1914 by **Marcus Garvey**. UNIA members were more militant. Garvey encouraged black people to establish their own businesses and to employ black people only. He also encouraged them to return to their homeland, Africa. Black is beautiful was his most famous slogan.
- William du Bois and Marcus Garvey both tried to improve conditions for black people, but their methods were so different that they became sworn enemies.

Knowledge Organiser : The Development of the USA 1910-1929 (Unit 2)

Key Question 3 : Was the 1920s a decade of organised crime and corruption?

Timeline of events



Key words

Prohibition period of American history where selling alcohol was outlawed

Anti-Saloon League organisation that pressured for prohibition

Speakeasies illegal bars

Bootleggers people who continued to distribute alcohol

Moonshine homemade, illegal alcohol

Organised crime organised illegal activities

Corruption dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery

Teapot Dome this was the biggest scandal during Harding's term, politicians leased the government's land to oil companies for money.

Important concept

Behind the glamour and wealth of the 1920s lay an underbelly of corruption. Had the laissez-faire approach towards the economy seeped into a laissez-faire attitude to other aspects of society? Certainly corruption was not dealt with efficiently during this period, especially when it was generating huge sums of money.

Government Corruption

- In 1920 Warren Harding was elected President of the USA. He gained a reputation as a weak manager for giving important and influential posts to friends and peers who were members of his cabinet. The Ohio Gang was a group of politicians who were in positions of power during Harding's administration. They betrayed the public's trust in several scandals.
- At the beginning of 1924, soon after Harding's death, Congress began investigating reports of corruption and bribery during Harding's administration. Several members of the Gang were charged and imprisoned for corruption.
- Charles R. Forbes was found guilty of fraud, conspiracy and bribery in the **Veterans' Bureau**.
- In 1927 Albert B. Fall, who Harding had appointed secretary of the interior, was found guilty, fined \$100,000 and imprisoned for his part in the **Teapot Dome scandal** and the **Elk-Hills oil** fund scandal.
- Harry M. Daugherty, who had been Attorney General, was found guilty of selling alcohol illegally and giving licences and pardons to offenders.

Organised Crime

- In every city, gangsters would try to control the supply of alcohol. Groups would fight each other for control of specific areas.
- Dion O'Bannon** controlled the bootleg business in the south of Chicago and **John Torrio** in the north. **Al Capone** was originally part of Torrio's gang before he took over.
- The mayor of Chicago, 'Big' **Bill Thompson**, was under the influence of Torrio's gang and encouraged others to turn a blind eye.
- Although Chicago was most notorious, **Dutch Schultz** was in control in New York and **Chester La Mare** controlled Detroit.
- The **Saint Valentine's Day Massacre** of 1929 was the climax of the gangster wars between Bugs Moran and Al Capone. Capone's men murdered 7 of Bugs Moran's gang while dressed as police officers. It seemed like things had gone too far.
- The authorities could not find enough evidence to convict Al Capone. He was eventually found guilty of tax evasion in 1931 and sent to prison.

Key Question 3 : Was the 1920s a decade of organised crime and corruption?

The Age of Prohibition

- A number of organisations, collectively known as 'the dries', for example, the **Anti-Saloon League** and the **Women's Christian Temperance Union**, and some religious groups such as the Methodists and the Baptists put pressure on the government to prohibit the production and sale of alcohol. They claimed that alcohol was the work of the devil and that it disobeyed Christianity. They said it increased crime, days off work, wife-beating and child abuse.
- They were successful as on 16 January 1920 the **Eighteenth Amendment** to the Constitution came into force, making it illegal to sell alcohol in the USA.
- The purpose of the **Volstead Act** of 1919 was to implement the Eighteenth Amendment and to set punishments for breaking the new law.
- However, it was difficult to enforce the Volstead Act. Demand for alcohol remained high so gangsters sold it illegally and made significant money from doing so. As a result, gangs fought to control this, and other trades, such as protection rackets and gambling dens. As gangsters started selling alcohol, **organised crime** started.
- The people who sold alcohol were called **Bootleggers**, e.g. Al Capone.
- **Rum-runners** smuggled alcohol into the USA from Canada and Mexico.
- **Moonshiners** distilled their own alcohol at home.
- Illegal drinking bars called **speakeasies** opened and by 1925 there were over 100,000 of these in New York alone.
- There was more corruption as gangsters bribed police officers, judges and politicians to turn a blind eye to their illegal activities.
- The legal system could not cope and so the government tried to solve the problem by appointing a Prohibition Commissioner, John F. Kramer, in 1921. Before long he established a cohort of 3,000 agents.
- In 1924 the Investigation Bureau (later called the FBI) was established under J. Edgar Hoover. His men had tougher methods.
- Attempts to try to enforce the Prohibition Act failed. There were not enough agents and they were on low salaries and easy to bribe. It was impossible to persuade drinkers to change a habit of a lifetime.

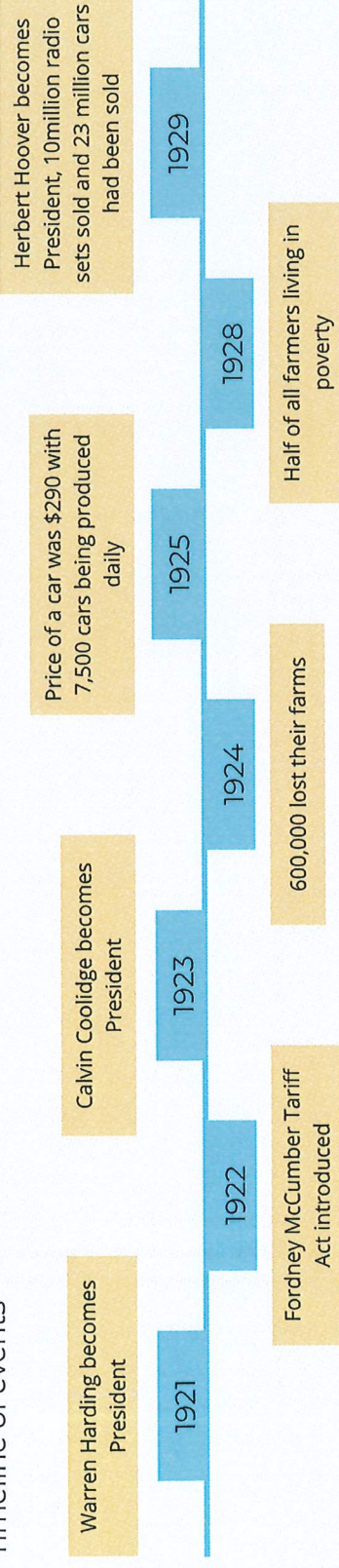
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Knowledge Organiser : The Development of the USA 1910-1929 (Unit 2)

Key Question 4 : What were the causes of economic boom?

Timeline of events



Important concept

The economic boom was caused by a number of factors combining simultaneously. Some of those factors were based on luck (plentiful natural resources, European contras stalling) but some were down to innovative thinking and decision making (mass production and protectionism). However, some felt this boom was not built on stable foundations.

Key words

Assembly line	a series of workers and machines in a factory by which a succession of identical items are progressively assembled
Boom	a period of prosperity in the economy, the economy was doing well and many people benefited
Fordney McCumber Tariff Act	taxes were imposed on goods from abroad in order to encourage people to buy American goods, this is an example of protectionism
Hire purchase and credit	a way of borrowing money, the ability to get the goods and pay back over a period of time
Laissez-faire	translated as 'leave well alone' or 'let the people choose', a government policy of interfering as little as possible in the economy
Mass production	a method of producing goods on a large scale and quickly
Rugged individualism	personal liberty and free competition and the idea that people should be self-reliant
Trade union	organised associations that protect the interests of workers when negotiating hours, wages, conditions, etc. may also be known as labour unions

America's assets and development

- The USA had a supply of natural resources; timber, iron, coal, minerals, oil and land. Immigrants provided a cheap work force.
- European economies suffered during WWI but the USA experienced significant growth. US banks loaned money to Europe and businesses sold much needed goods. From 1922, the USA experienced an unprecedented economic boom.
- During the 1920s the electricity industry experienced a huge **boom**. By 1929 the majority of houses in America had electricity and 70 per cent of them used it for lighting purposes.
- Electrical power drove machinery in factories making it possible to introduce **mass production** to a number of factories.
- The car industry is the best example of mass production. **Henry Ford** was a pioneer, producing affordable cars for the people of America. As he produced more and more cars, he could reduce his prices. In 1908, the price of a car was \$850. By 1925 the price of a car was around \$290.
- By 1929, Americans owned 23 million cars. Workers earned good wages (\$5 per day), thousands of jobs were created, roads and petrol stations were built, as were hotels and restaurants.
- Systems of **hire-purchase and credit** were introduced. This meant that a person could buy something by paying for it on a monthly basis.
- Advertisements** were placed on roadsides, on the radio, in newspapers and in cinemas and chain stores appeared for the first time, e.g. J P Penney. Catalogue shopping also became fashionable as it was a convenient way of buying goods.

Knowledge Organiser: The Development of the USA 1910-1929 (Unit 2)

Key Question 4 : What were the causes of economic boom?

New consumer society

- The biggest economic growth was in new industries such as chemicals, electrical goods and cars. The introduction of electricity in the home triggered a huge expansion in the household electrical goods industry.
- In 1919, 60,000 radio sets had been sold, but in 1929, 10 million were sold. There was a similar growth in sales of telephone equipment, from 10 million in 1915 to 20 million in 1930.
- America's building industry was busier than it had ever been during the 1920s. This was partly due to the demand for new factories and new office buildings for banking, insurance and advertising companies. This was the age of the **skyscraper** – companies wanted to demonstrate their power and importance by building the tallest and grandest offices.
- It was Ford's idea to build a car on an electrical **assembly line**. The car would move slowly along the line with each worker only doing one specific task. In this way, it would be possible to build a Ford Model T car in an hour and a half instead of 13.5 hours. By the mid-1920s, 7,500 cars were being produced daily - one car every 10 seconds!
- The car changed America in every way. It led to the construction of new roads and **suburbs**. People's way of life was changing in a big way. The development of the car industry sparked a growth in other industries, e.g. cars used 90 per cent of America's petrol, as well as 80 per cent of the country's rubber and 75 per cent of its glass.

Attitudes and policies of Republican presidents

- There were three Republican presidents during the 1920s. The policy of these Republican presidents was that government should leave the economy alone – they adopted a **laissez-faire** (free market) policy. This meant that big businesses were free to expand without being held back by the government.
- **Warren Harding (1921-23)** promised a return to normality. He reduced taxes to give businesses more money to grow, and in 1922, he introduced the **Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act** which imposed a tax on goods from foreign countries. This made foreign goods more expensive than domestic goods, and so this encouraged Americans to buy American goods only. The name for this policy was **protectionism**.
- 'Business is America's business,' said **Calvin Coolidge (1923-29)**. Although he didn't do much (his nickname was 'Silent Cal'), Americans believed he was a good president because of the strength of the economy. He had a huge respect for businessmen and adhered to the **laissez-faire** policy.
- **Herbert Hoover (1929-32)** became president in 1929 following his promise to put a chicken in every cooking pot, and a car in every garage. Hoover believed in **laissez-faire**, but also in **rugged individualism**. This meant that people should not depend on the government for help - they should solve their own problems by working harder. Hoover lost the next presidential election in 1932 because of this viewpoint - it was too severe - especially after the Wall Street Crash and Depression.

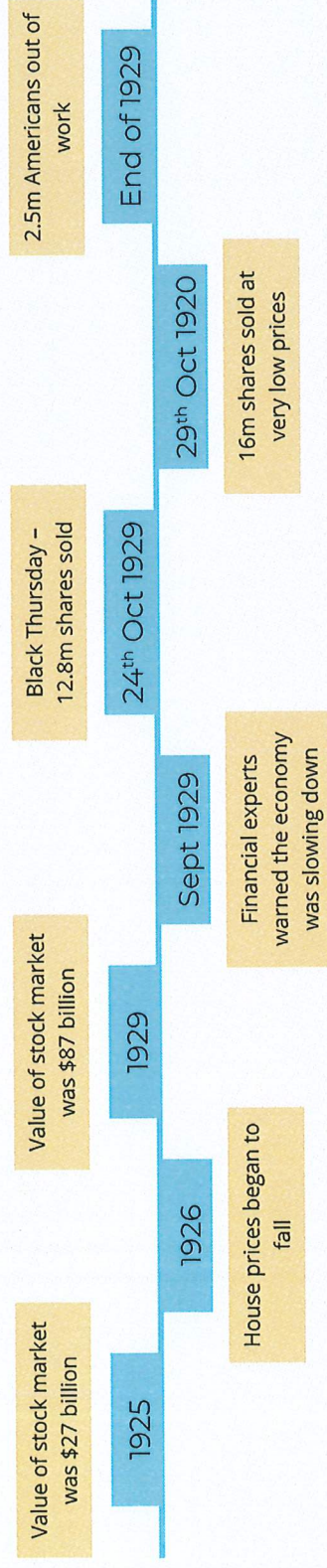
How did this prosperity affect American society?

- Farmers were producing too many crops causing prices to fall and farmers borrow money from the banks. Eventually many had to sell their farms and go looking for work
- By 1928 half of all USA farmers were living in poverty. 600,000 farmers lost their farms in 1924 alone.
- Black people suffered, especially in the southern states, where the majority worked on small farms as labourers or **sharecroppers** and lived in real poverty.
- Segregation, due to **Jim Crow laws**, and the presence of the **KKK** in the southern states, made life even harder and many black people migrated to northern cities like New York, Detroit and Chicago to find work in the new industries. Conditions remained hard for the majority of those who migrated north as they lived in ghettos and were often "the last hired and first to be fired".
- The unemployment rate amongst new immigrants remained high. Many were willing to work in any kind of job for very low wages.
- The traditional industries failed to respond to the new mass production. Also, following a reduction in the powers of **Labour Unions**, the workers were not in a position to be able to claim better wages and working conditions in the old industries.
- Coal prices fell and thousands had to be made redundant. **Ship building** was another major industry that had to make thousands redundant.
- New synthetic fibres were being developed, such as rayon. This became a very popular substitute to cotton. It was possible to produce rayon in factories where fewer workers were needed. Many textile mills were forced to close down.

Knowledge Organiser : The Development of the USA (Unit 2)

Key Question 5 : What factors led to the end of prosperity in 1929?

Timeline of events



Important concept

Just as the boom was caused by a number of factors combining, so too was the crash, with some of causes of the boom ended up leading to the crash, over production of goods and rising stock markets being an example. The long term causes were always there, yet only when people began to realise the precarious nature of the economy did the market crash at the end of the period. And what a crash it was!

Key words

Black Thursday 24 October 1929 - the start of the Wall Street Crash, a 'black' day economically.

Consumer Goods goods that are used as an end in themselves and not for the production of other goods, e.g. vacuum cleaner, fridge and radio

Great Depression a prolonged economic downturn, beginning after the Wall Street Crash, that affected the whole world

On the margin people borrowing money in order to be able to buy shares

Shares financial stakes in a company or business

The stock market a centre where shares are bought and sold

Wall Street crash the economic downturn on the American stock market in 1929

How did this prosperity affect American society?

- A number of financial experts warned that the American economy was slowing down and in September 1929 some investors started selling **shares** in large numbers. Many people started feeling nervous and investors went into panic and rushed to sell their shares.
- On 24 October 1929, now referred to as **Black Thursday**, 12.8 million shares were sold. Thousands of people saw their fortune, or any money they had in the bank, disappear. On 29 October 1929, 16 million shares were sold at very low prices. **The Stock Market** in New York had collapsed.
- The Roaring Twenties** came to a sudden end. Investors lost their money in the Crash and could not pay their debts. Many banks closed, ordinary people lost their savings and people lost all hope for the future.
- People could no longer buy consumer goods like cars and clothes. As a result, workers were made redundant, other workers' wages were cut and unemployment rose to very high levels. By the end of 1929, 2.5 million Americans were out of work.
- This was the start of the **Great Depression** of the 1930s.

Key Question 5: What factors led to the end of prosperity in 1929?

Long and short term causes

Longer term causes

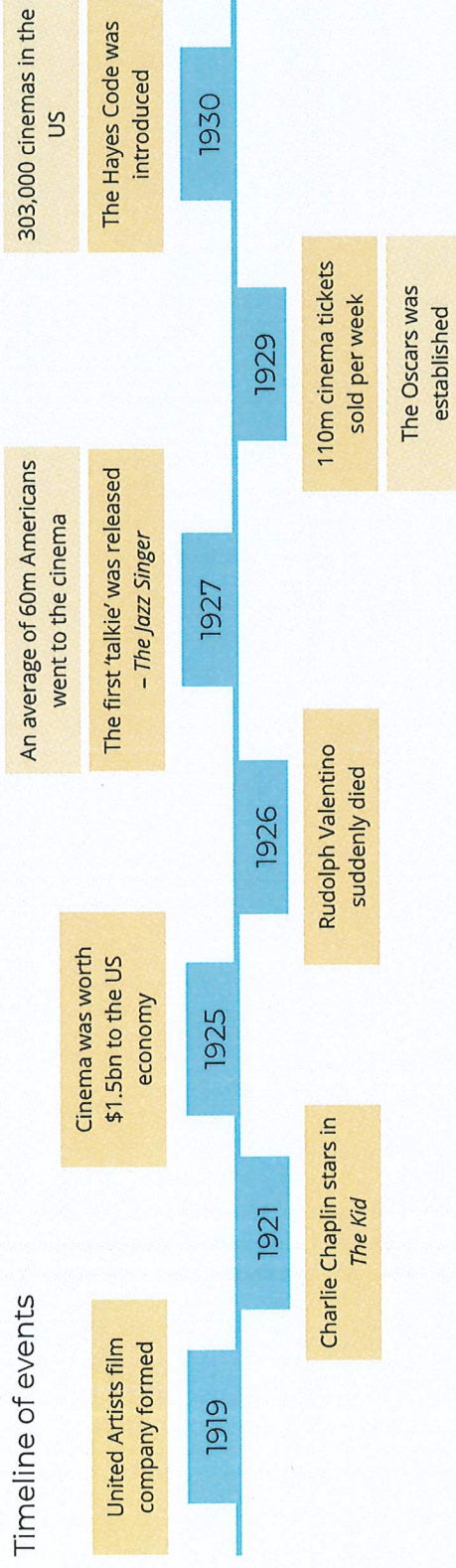
- **Overproduction in agriculture** - as farming techniques improved and demand from Europe dropped, farmers were producing too much food. This caused a fall in prices, and drop in profits, so thousands of farmers had to sell their farms.
- **Overproduction in industry/falling demand for goods** - by the end of the 1920s there were too many **consumer goods** unsold in the USA. Not everyone in America was rich. Those that could afford to buy cars, refrigerators etc had already bought one, but approximately 60 per cent of Americans could not. The supply was bigger than the demand.
- **Buying on credit** - some of the country's poorer people bought goods on credit and as a result, a great deal of them owed money to shops and large companies. Many of these companies subsequently went into financial difficulties as the poor failed to pay their debts.
- **Commerce** - by the end of the 1920s, America tried to sell its surplus goods to European countries. But, in response to the **Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act**, European countries had imposed a tax on American goods. So American goods were too expensive to buy in Europe and, as a result, there wasn't much trade between America and European countries.
- **Property prices** - house prices increased a great deal in the early 1920s. But after 1926, house prices fell leaving a number of Americans owning houses that were worth less money than what they had paid (and borrowed from the bank) for it. This is called negative equity.
- **Too many small banks** - due to **laissez-faire** policies banks were not tightly regulated meaning there were only a few rules to follow to run a bank. There were many small banks that did not have the financial resources to cope with the rush for money when the **Wall Street Crash** happened. A number of banks had to close leaving thousands of customers with no money and no confidence in the banking system.

Short term reasons

- **The Stock Market** - throughout the 1920s the prices of shares had increased to unrealistic levels. People continued to buy shares as they were making huge profits from them. By 1929 over 20 million people had invested in shares. The value of the stock market had more than tripled from \$27 billion in 1925 to \$87 billion in 1929.
- **Over speculation** - as it was easy to borrow money, many people would buy shares **on the margin** - which meant borrowing money to buy shares and then holding on to them until they were worth more than the debt. Approximately 75 per cent of the purchase price of shares was borrowed in 1929. Then they would sell the shares, pay off the original debt and make a profit.
- **Loss of confidence and a sudden fall in prices** - the Wall Street Crash.

Key Question 6 : How did popular entertainment develop during this period?

Timeline of events



Important concept

Perhaps the term 'roaring twenties' best applies to popular entertainment of the time. The seemingly strong economy meant that the glamour of cinema could be realised by many through fashion, parties, jazz clubs and dancing. This combination of greater wealth, new fashion, new music and an exciting 'speakeasy' culture certainly changed the cultural landscape for many.

Cinema

- The cinema was the most exciting development of the time. It influenced people in a number of ways - both in terms of fashion and the way in which people behaved.
- Every small town had a cinema and many Americans, with increased leisure time and disposable income due to changes in working patterns, could go several times a week as it was reasonably cheap.
- During the early 1920s, every movie was silent. Cinemas used to employ musicians to play the piano or electric organ during the films.
- Hollywood** was the perfect place for outdoor filming as it was located near Los Angeles in the heart of a part of America that had a very dry and sunny climate. It also had a variety of landscapes such as mountains and coastline.
- The major movie companies in Hollywood during this period were Paramount, Warner Bros and MGM. By **marketing** their range of different movies extensively – cowboy movies, detective stories, comedies and romantic movies – they succeeded in generating a huge interest in the movie stars.
- The cinemas were luxurious and pleasant places in which Americans could socialise, and they could get to them easily in their cars.
- The stars also contributed to the increase in the popularity of the cinema. The Italian, Rudolph Valentino, was a very popular actor and his role in *The Sheik* (1921) made him a sex symbol. He was a star and appeared in many of the early films, earning \$1 million. When he died suddenly in 1926, his fans were grief-stricken and a number of women committed suicide.
- Charlie Chaplin was a very influential figure and was one of the founders of the United Artists film company with Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and D W Griffith in 1919. He was also a famous actor, starring in silent films such as *The Tramp* (1915) and *The Kid* (1921). He was instantly recognisable with his tramp-like image and preferred the craft of the silent movie rather than the **talkies** that came later.
- Arguably women like Clara Bow, the original 'It Girl', were the Hollywood stars that had the most influence on society at the time. She played the part of a **flapper** in a number of films, and influenced many young girls to behave in the same way. She was the most popular actress in 1928 and 1929.
- Actors such as Gloria Swanson and Buster Keaton were also influential.

Key words

the term used to describe a liberated, young, fashionable woman in 1920s America whose behaviour would have been considered unconventional

Flapper

a centre in California for film creation and production

Hollywood

films with no sound

Silent Films

films with sound

Talkies

a period during the 1920s when people enjoyed cultural and economic developments

The Roaring Twenties

the term used to describe a liberated, young, fashionable woman in 1920s America whose behaviour would have been considered unconventional

Flapper

a centre in California for film creation and production

Hollywood

Key Question 6: How did popular entertainment develop during this period?

The 'Talkies'

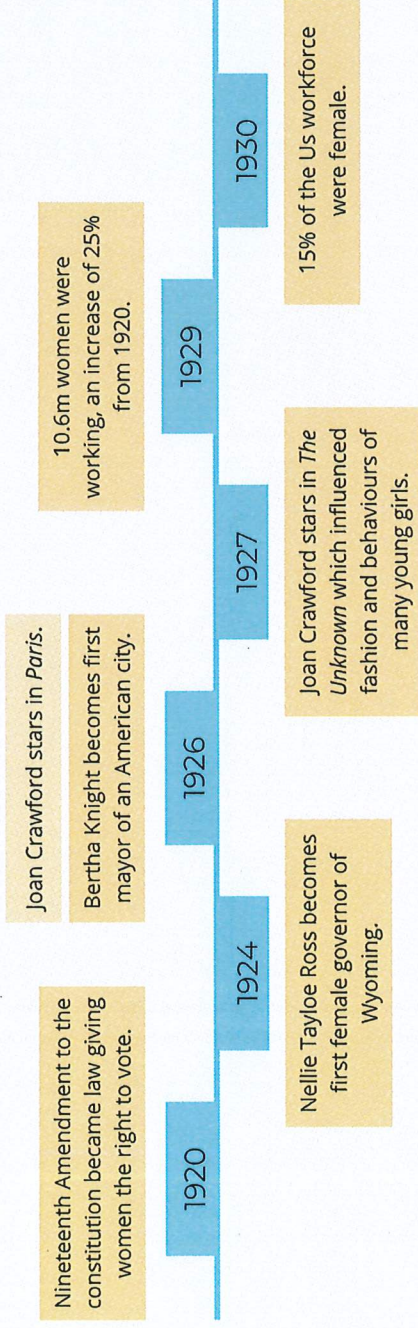
- In 1927 an average of 60 million Americans went to the cinema on a weekly basis. This increased to over 100 million by 1929.
- The increase was partly due to the development of audio films in 1927, with Al Jolson starring in *The Jazz Singer* (1927) marking the beginning of the era of the talkies. The increase was also down to Hollywood's success in producing 500 films per year.
- The 1920s was also the era of the cartoon, with *Felix the Cat* (1925) and *Mickey Mouse* (1928) gaining popularity among people of all ages.
- In 1929 The Oscars were established to honour film stars.
- But not every American was happy with the new cinemas.
- The Hays Code was drawn up in 1930. In accordance with this code, scenes of nudity and dancing of a sexual nature were prohibited, a kiss could last for no more than seven metres of film, adultery was not to be portrayed in a good light, clergymen were not to be ridiculed and films should condemn killing.
- Some people, especially religious people, were very concerned about a lack of morals and the influence of the films on young people.

Popular music and culture

- Some referred to the 1920s as **The Roaring Twenties**. People had more money to spend and more time to listen to the music of the time.
- Jazz originated from the southern states of the USA, from the blues and ragtime music of the black people. Jazz was much more rhythmic and lively, and it was easy to dance to. This led to young people smoking, drinking and, according to some, behaving indecently. College students, especially, were willing to challenge their parents' values and lifestyle.
- A number of black musicians became very famous, including Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith, The Empress of the Blues. But racism was still a major problem during this period. When Bessie Smith had a serious car crash in 1937, she was taken to a hospital that was for white people only. The hospital refused to treat her because she was black and she died.
- Listening to the radio was arguably the most popular form of entertainment. Mass production, the spread of electricity and buying on hire-purchase meant that approximately 50 million people, that's 40 per cent of the population, had a radio set by the end of the 1920s.
- Also, as the popularity of jazz increased, more people bought radios, records and gramophones so that they could listen to jazz any time they wanted to.
- People could also listen to their favourite team taking part in sports matches, The radio was able to grow and succeed because companies paid to advertise their products on the medium.
- More daring dances became popular after World War One. These resulted from swing dancing that developed alongside jazz music, and so black people had a huge influence.
- Dances such as the **Charleston** and the **Black Bottom** became very popular with young people.
- Because many of these new dances were sexually suggestive, parents were shocked by their children's enthusiasm to dance them.
- The Lindy Hop also became a popular dance – this dance honoured **Charles Lindbergh** for crossing the Atlantic in an aeroplane in 1927. Jazz had been prohibited in a number of cities, for example New York and Detroit. So, the performances moved to the speakeasies, making the young people even more determined to rebel.

Key Question 7: How did the lifestyle and status of women change during this period?

Timeline of events



Key words

the term used to describe a liberated, young, fashionable woman in 1920s America whose behaviour would have been considered unconventional

a person who would accompany and look after young women, typically on older relative

short female haircut

group campaigning for the rights of women to vote

group set up to challenge the behaviour of flappers

Flapper

Chaperone

'Bob' haircut

National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)

Anti-Flirt League

Important concept

There's no doubt that the status of women changed during the period. Politically, in terms of the vote and greater representation, as well as socially, many women's lives were unrecognisable from those of their mothers' generation. However, this impact was not felt by all. It was certainly a time for change for the middle classes, the young and those in cities but perhaps less so for everyone else.

Changing attitudes towards women

- The general view is that attitudes towards women underwent a significant shift during the 1920s. Before the war, girls were expected to behave modestly and wear long dresses. When they went out, they had to be accompanied by an older woman or a married woman.
- It was totally unacceptable for a woman to smoke in public. Women were employed in jobs that were traditionally associated with women, e.g. servants, seamstresses, secretaries, nursing.
- During the war, women started to be employed in different types of jobs, e.g. factory work, replacing the men who had gone to fight in the war in Europe.
- Organisations such as the **National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)** had been fighting for decades to get the vote for women. As women had contributed so much to the war effort, it was difficult to refuse their demands for political equality. As a result, the **Nineteenth Amendment** to the constitution became law in 1920, giving women the right to vote. Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming became the first woman to be elected governor of state in 1924.
- There was a change as far as work was concerned too, with an increase of 25 per cent in the number of women working during the 1920s. By 1929, 10.6 million women were working.
- By now, independent women of the middle classes and above had more money to spend. Because of this, advertising companies started targeting women in their campaigns to encourage them to buy their new products.

Key Question 7: How did the lifestyle and status of women change during this period?

Changing attitudes to social etiquette

- Women started to smoke in public. It became acceptable for women to drive cars and take part in energetic sports.
- The young women of the 1920s were referred to as **flappers**. Hollywood films of the period characterised them, and as a result, their behaviour and dress sense was imitated by millions around the world.
- In 1919 women's skirts were about six inches above ground level, but by 1927 the hems of skirts were up to knee-level. Young women rebelled against the old-fashioned clothes of their mothers' era.
- The corset went out of fashion, and it became all the rage for women to cut their hair in a bob and wear a lot of make-up and jewellery.
- One famous flapper of the time was Joan Crawford. She started her career as a dancer on Broadway before moving to Hollywood to make a name for herself. She starred in films such as *Paris* (1926) and *The Unknown* (1927) in which she became famous for her flapper style. She drank, smoked, danced the Charleston and even kissed on screen. Many young girls admired and copied her style.

Influence of jazz culture

- Jazz wasn't just about the music – there was a wider cultural element associated with it.
- The jazz clubs played a crucial role in allowing the flappers to express themselves. This is where they could smoke and dance. They also drank illegal alcohol in the speakeasies.
- Instead of dancing the waltz that was popular in the period before the war, people started to enjoy more daring dances such as the Shimmy and the Bunny Hug.
- **Petting parties** began where the flappers would kiss men in public.
- The flappers had their own slang. I have to go see a man about a dog was slang for going to buy whiskey, and a 'handcuff' or 'manacle' was an engagement or wedding ring.
- A number of the flappers' terms are still used today, e.g. 'big cheese' for an important person, 'bump off' for killing someone and 'hooch' for alcohol.
- But not every girl enjoyed the flappers' way of life. Poor women could not afford the new fashions and they didn't have the time to go out and enjoy social events. Black women could not benefit from the changing lifestyle either.
- Women in the **Bible Belt** did not adopt the new way of life. Also, many older women were outraged and some formed the Anti-Flirt Club.
- **It was the young and rich women who enjoyed the new way of life. Older people and religious people rejected the changes, and the poor people could not afford them.**